

QUIET IN THE PULPIT:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF INTROVERTED PASTORS

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ABSTRACT

Many of the duties involved in the pastoral ministry involve large amounts of interaction with other people. From preaching and teaching to mixing and mingling, a pastor needs to be able to spend time with members and nonmembers alike. However, this function does not come naturally to everyone. While many definitions for what it truly means to be an introvert exist, it is widely recognized that such individuals naturally tend to prefer time in solitude with lesser amounts of social stimulation. This tendency suggests that pastors who possess this particular personality type will experience a higher amount of tension and discomfort as they carry out certain functions of their call. This thesis analyzes the experiences of several introverted pastors with the goal of presenting an accurate picture of how introverts experience the pastoral ministry. The reader will see both the difficulties and the blessings of being an introverted pastor, as well as the practices incorporated by these men as they faithfully serve God and their people. This paper encourages introverted pastors to confidently use their God-given personality to be a blessing to the church.

INTRODUCTION

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well” (Ps 139:13-14, NIV). In this famous psalm, David meditates on the transcendence of the Lord. His God is ever-present, unable to be escaped. His God is omniscient, knowing everything about his people. The evidence that David gives for this perfect knowledge possessed by God: the awesome work of God’s creation of him as a person. He knows that the Lord is wise and powerful because of how wonderfully he has made his servant.

The words of Psalm 139 are beautiful expressions of awe and gratitude toward the God who knit the psalmist together. This psalm declares facts that every person can take to heart. Every human can look at himself or herself and have peace in the way God has personally created them. All people can fully trust that the Lord can and will use them to carry out his perfect will. However, since Adam and Eve looked at the fruit of the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden, the crown of God’s creation has often looked at itself and lacked that sublime confidence. This may take the form of dissatisfaction with certain features of the body which God has created, but it is also found when people disparage the personality with which their Maker has endowed them.

This paper addresses the second factor listed above: dissatisfaction with one’s God-given personality. While the facets of personality that could be explored with respect to this issue are numerous, this writer will be focusing on the trait of introversion, especially as it relates to the

pastoral ministry. Many duties involved in the pastoral call are decidedly extravert-oriented. Responsibilities such as outreach, leadership, and public speaking can often be viewed as necessitating a bold, sociable, and assertive leader. However, the fact of the matter is that many pastoral calls are filled by quiet, gentle, reserved individuals, people who do not lead in the manner that many in Western culture would consider to be ideal. How do they do this effectively? What is it like for introverts as they faithfully carry out the aspects of their call that may seem unnatural to their personality?

The goal of this researcher is to answer those two questions. This is not a quantitative study. I will not look at percentages or numerical trends of introverted pastors. By means of a qualitative study, I will focus on the experiences and practices of six introverted pastors in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS).

In order to better understand introversion, I will first present a review of literature relevant to this subject. This section will introduce the development of personality theory over the previous century, the distinction between introversion and extraversion, the cultural perception of these personality types, and the discussion of introversion as it relates to the church. Following this, I will introduce various personality theories that take introversion into account. It is through the lenses of these theories that I will analyze the findings from my interviews. Next, I will explain the four research questions that guided my study. These questions are centered on the difficulties and blessings of being an introverted pastor, the practices incorporated by these pastors because of their personality, and the overall experience of introverts in the public ministry. I will then briefly introduce my research methodology and my participants, and I will discuss my findings in light of the aforementioned research questions. Finally, I will conclude with the implications I believe they reveal.

By means of this study, I hope to glorify God for how he uses quiet, reserved people to accomplish his Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20). I will seek to encourage ministry-minded introverts to embrace their God-given personality as they serve his people. Additionally, I also desire to impart practical guidance regarding how others have effectively carried out those pastoral duties which may not come naturally to this personality type. In a world where charisma and gregariousness are so often seen as the most desirable leadership qualities, I hope to encourage introverted pastors to be who they are as they serve God's people.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers over the previous century have placed a great deal of emphasis on the field of psychology as it relates to personality. It has gone from a new, speculative area of study to a diverse field filled with hypotheses and theories as to how an individual's personality affects their thoughts and behaviors. An attempt to summarize relevant literature is presented below.

Personality Theory and Introversion

Around the turn of the 20th century, Sigmund Freud and his psychoanalytic theory began to emphasize the presence of unconscious forces that he felt controlled individuals from the inside. For him, an individual's personality originates in the id: an inborn, unconscious reservoir of physical and psychological instincts.¹ He theorized that the unconscious was the primary influence that guided one's daily life.²

Whereas Freud maintained that these subconscious influences were sexual in nature, his pupil Carl Jung rejected that part of his mentor's theory. Jung wrote about a "personal unconscious," the forgotten or repressed contents of an individual's mind that contribute to who

1. Bem P. Allen, *Personality Theories: Development, Growth, and Diversity*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1996), 25.

2. John A. Bargh and Ezequiel Morsella, "The Unconscious Mind," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 3.1 (2008): 73.

an individual is as a person.³ After twenty years of studying people from a wide variety of cultures, Jung began to believe it possible to distinguish individuals in terms of different psychological types.⁴ As part of this typological theory, Jung discussed the presence of distinct mental predispositions that humans have to act or react to stimuli in a particular manner.⁵ He identified two predominant, fundamentally different examples of these “psychological attitudes”: extraversion and introversion.⁶

In his theory Jung defined extraversion as an “outward-turning” of one’s libido, or psychic energy.⁷ An extraverted person would not be as interested in their own inner experiences as they are in objects outside of themselves; they apply their energy to the external world and depend upon those external objects which they value so highly.⁸ Introverts, on the other hand, turn their psychic energy inwards and withdraw their interest away from outer objects.⁹ This manifests itself in a person who “holds aloof from external happenings, does not join in, has a distinct dislike of society as soon as he finds himself among too many people. In a large gathering he feels lonely and lost . . . His own world is a safe harbour, a carefully tended garden, closed to the public and hidden from prying eyes.”¹⁰ Whereas Freud believed introversion was a

3. Allen, *Personality Theories*, 52.

4. C. G. Jung, *Collected Works of C.G. Jung: Psychological Types*, trans. Gerhard Adler and R. F. C. Hull, vol. VI (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1921), 549.

5. Jung, *Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, 414.

6. Allen, *Personality Theories*, 60.

7. Allen, *Personality Theories*, 60.

8. Peter Geyer, “Introversion – Extraversion: What C.G. Jung Meant and How Contemporaries Responded,” presented at AusAPT Biennial Conference, Melbourne (2012), 2.

9. Allen, *Personality Theories*, 60.

10. Jung, *Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, 550.

sign of pathological narcissism, Jung maintained that it was a healthy trait that solely indicated where an individual turned to find energy.¹¹

In addition to these two chief types, Jung also suggested four different “orientations” found in personalities: sensing, intuiting, thinking, and feeling.¹² The sense orientation emphasizes an affinity for observable facts, whereas intuitive individuals are more driven by following instincts that have no tangible basis. Feeling-oriented people are more affected by mood, and those with a thinking orientation prefer to connect ideas and interpret their meaning.

It did not take long for the terms “introversion” and “extraversion” to slip into common vocabulary. Already by 1931, A.A. Roback noted that the labels had become a convenient way of distinguishing individualistic people from sociable ones.¹³ However, a definitive method of identifying and measuring these types in individuals was still missing.

Two decades after Jung introduced his personality typology theory, Katherine Cook Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers developed a test designed to assess an individual’s preference for each of these dichotomies (extraversion-introversion, intuition-sensing, thinking-feeling).¹⁴ The mother-daughter pair also added the dimension of judging (planning-oriented) and perceiving (preferring spontaneity) to the list of dichotomies. Based on an individual’s response to a questionnaire, the indicator’s goal is to classify the subject into one of sixteen qualitatively different personality types, while also indicating the strength of the person’s preference in each

11. Adam S. McHugh, *Introverts in the Church: Finding Our Place in an Extroverted Culture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009), 37.

12. Allen, *Personality Theories*, 60.

13. Geyer, “Introversion – Extraversion,” 5.

14. Randy Stein and Alexander B. Swan, “Evaluating the Validity of Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Theory: A Teaching Tool and Window into Intuitive Psychology,” *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 13.2 (2019): 2.

area.¹⁵ In the manual on how to use the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), introverts are described as people who are “oriented primarily toward the inner world; thus they tend to focus their perception and judgment upon concepts and ideas.”¹⁶ This type indicator eventually developed into the most widely used psychological test.¹⁷

Modern Perspectives on Introversion

In recent years, a renewed focus has been placed on analyzing the experiences of introverted personalities in modern American society. The American writer and former attorney Susan Cain touched a cultural nerve with her bestseller *Quiet*. According to her analysis, while contemporary researchers do not have a consensus definition of what constitutes an introvert, they have agreed on several points: introverts function better with less external stimulation, work slowly and deliberately, prefer listening to talking, and would rather devote their social energy to close relationships instead of mingling at larger gatherings.¹⁸ While they may appear withdrawn and shy, those are not essential characteristics to the introverted person. She argues that introverts are undervalued and able to make great contributions to society in a wide variety of areas.

Another observation made by Cain is that Western culture has adopted a value system she calls the “Extravert Ideal – the omnipresent belief that the ideal self is gregarious, alpha, and

15. Robert R. McCrae and Paul T. Costa Jr., “Reinterpreting the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator From the Perspective of the Five-Factor Model of Personality,” *Journal of Personality* 57.1 (1989): 20.

16. Isabel Briggs Myers et al., *MBTI Manual: A Guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*, 2nd ed. (Palo Alto, Calif: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1985), 2.

17. James Michael, “Using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator as a Tool for Leadership Development? Apply With Caution,” *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies* 10.1 (2003): 68.

18. Susan Cain, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking*, (New York: Crown, 2012), 11.

comfortable in the spotlight.”¹⁹ In such a world, introversion is viewed as a lesser personality type. This idea is already evident fairly early in the 20th century. It is seen clearly in the work and success of public speaking lecturer Dale Carnegie. Attempting to tap into the average American’s desire to be more self-confident and successful, he wrote several books on self-improvement and interpersonal skills.²⁰ The fact that Carnegie viewed success as excluding introverted qualities can be seen on the back cover of his guide to being a better mixer and conversationalist, where it says, “Read it and improve your personality.”²¹

This man’s rise to fame alone is emblematic of the rise of the extravert. His transformation from lowly farm boy to public-speaking champion reflects how the United States began to embrace a culture of personality: “Americans started to focus on how others perceived them. They became captivated by people who were bold and entertaining.”²² This personality-obsessed culture pushed aside the serious-yet-honorable self and idealized the ability to charm and persuade others by exuding charisma. Research shows that this culture of personality is still prevalent in modern times. Laney cites a study replicated three times where both introverts and extraverts expressed the idea that their ideal self would be extraverted, concluding that “we definitely learn extroversion is the way we *should* be.”²³ McHugh points to a 2004 study done at

19. Cain, *Quiet*, 4.

20. Dale Carnegie, *How to Develop Self-Confidence and Influence People by Public Speaking* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017), 2.

21. Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, 1st edition. (New York: Pocket Books, 1936), back cover.

22. Cain, *Quiet*, 21.

23. Marti Olsen Laney, *The Introvert Advantage: How Quiet People Can Thrive in an Extrovert World* (New York: Workman Publishing Company, 2002), 53.

a Christian college where 97 percent of students (over half of whom tested as introverts) considered Jesus—the perfect human being—to be an extravert.²⁴

The conversation regarding introverted typology has also begun to bleed into the realm of leadership in the church. Already in 1988, Roy Oswald and Otto Kroeger wrote about the power of using the MBTI to help pastors approach ministry in ways that are conducive to their personalities.²⁵ Despite the observation that churches have embraced the extravert ideal, McHugh encourages introverts to lead and minister in ways that are consistent with the personality God has blessed them with.²⁶

24. McHugh, *Introverts in the Church*, 18.

25. Roy M. Oswald and Otto Kroeger, *Personality Type and Religious Leadership* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1988), 1.

26. McHugh, *Introverts in the Church*, 15.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

Although researchers are starting to consider the impact of introversion on pastoral leadership, the amount of qualitative research carried out in this area remains low. Francis and Smith conducted a 2016 study where both introverted and extraverted supervising priests and curates reflected on their experience in ministry.²⁷ York performed a qualitative study on the practices of effective introverted pastors of the United Methodist Church and how they lead the laity in their congregations.²⁸ Liebegott investigated the effect that the extravert ideal has on how introverted senior pastors carry out their call to leadership in the church.²⁹

Part of this study will ask the experiential question of “What is it like to be an introverted pastor?” While this research will intersect with the Liebegott and York studies by considering pastoral leadership, it will branch out from there in its investigation into how introverted pastors experience other essential tasks involved in the public ministry. These duties include outreach, mingling with members and guests, and working together with associates and lay leaders. The reason for this focus is that a commonality among introverts is a general discomfort in situations involving a high amount of external stimulation: “They can be easily overstimulated by the

27. Leslie J. Francis and Greg Smith, “Introverts and Extraverts Reflecting on the Experience of Parish Ministry: Conversation Between Training Incumbents and Curates,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 25.1 (2016): 77.

28. David York, “Not Saul’s Armor: Introversion and Effective Pastoral Leadership,” *Asbury Theological Seminary* (2016): 1.

29. Shawn Liebegott, “A Phenomenological Study of the Impact of the Extrovert Ideal on Introverted Senior Pastors,” *Doctoral Dissertations and Projects* (2021), 16.

external world, experiencing the uncomfortable feeling of ‘too much.’ This can feel like antsiness or torpor.”³⁰ The aforementioned necessary practices of all pastors certainly involve a certain degree of external stimulation. Therefore, introverted pastors may need experience and practice in order to effectively carry them out. The perspective and insight of pastors with personal history in these duties can serve as a great resource for introverted ministers who may be struggling or lacking confidence in such areas.

This study is also unique in that it will intentionally draw from the experiences of pastors from several different age demographics. The goal of this facet is to determine what—if any—meaning can be derived related to one’s amount of experience and comfortability with being an introverted pastor. McHugh describes his personal journey of self-discovery as an introverted pastor as one filled with joy and hope.³¹ This could very well be a common thread for many quiet pastors as they strive to be faithful to a vocation that necessitates long hours spent teaching, leading, rebuking, and socializing with people. It would be foolish to ignore the wisdom accumulated by quiet pastors over a lifetime of ministry. Their stories can be an invaluable resource to younger pastors who may be experiencing confusion and frustration as they strive to shepherd God’s people effectively in a way that is conducive to their personalities.

In short, I believe introverted pastors can learn a great deal from one another. The public ministry may be a particularly draining vocation for introverts. This has the potential to leave such ministers wondering whether or not they truly can serve God’s people in this capacity with the personality their Creator endowed them with. I believe this to be especially important in a culture where the ideal leader is viewed as loud and assertive. If introverted pastors do, in fact,

30. Laney, *The Introvert Advantage*, 19.

31. McHugh, *Introverts in the Church*, 11.

feel that such a bias is working against them, important lessons can be learned from how they navigate the social spaces where the extravert ideal is strongly present in a way that remains faithful to their natural personalities. By means of this study, I will draw from the experience of pastors who have wrestled with such issues in order to encourage and guide their brothers in ministry.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In order to effectively evaluate the qualitative data gathered in this study, I will explore two personality typology theories that take introversion into account. As I analyze the qualitative data on the basis of these theories, I will determine how they correspond to the experiences of introverted pastors.

The aforementioned MBTI must be kept under consideration when evaluating the introvert-extravert distinction. This test “is widely recognized as an important measure of normal or non-pathological variations in personality.”³² The introversion-extraversion aspect of the MBTI—derived from Carl Jung’s typological theory—is designed to reveal “whether one’s general attitude towards the world is actively oriented outward to other persons and objects, or is internally oriented.”³³ Despite the fact that introverts can learn to act like extraverts, the MBTI reveals the primary preference that will dominate the individual’s personality.³⁴ This test can, at the very least, offer “a psychometrically simple description of Jungian personality types.”³⁵ In a

32. Bruce Thompson and Gloria M. Borrello, “Construct Validity of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator,” *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 46.3 (1986): 745.

33. Gregory J. Boyle, “Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI): Some Psychometric Limitations,” *Australian Psychologist* 30.1 (1995): 72.

34. David Pittenger, “Measuring the MBTI... and Coming up Short,” *Journal of Career Planning and Employment* 54.1 (1993): 50.

35. Boyle, “Some Psychometric Limitations,” 74.

study considering how introverts experience the pastoral ministry, it is beneficial to evaluate a theory centered on the inward attitudes and orientations of an individual.

Another personality theory that has been popular since the late-20th century is the Five Factor Model (FFM), sometimes referred to as the Big-5 model. It is defined as “a multidimensional approach towards defining personality, through measuring openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.”³⁶ These five macro traits are commonly referred to using the acronym OCEAN. It is the trait of extraversion that will be pertinent to the study at hand. A complaint levied against the MBTI is that it confuses social and thinking introversion.³⁷ McCrae and John claim that thinking introversion—the preference to orient one’s attitude inward—is reflected by the O and C factors contained in the FFM. The E trait, then, would be indicative of one’s level of social introversion. A high E score “implies an energetic approach toward the social and material world and includes traits such as sociability, activity, assertiveness, and positive emotionality.”³⁸ Some adjectives used to describe people whose test shows a strong preference for E are active, assertive, energetic, enthusiastic, outgoing, and talkative.³⁹ Those whose tests reveal a low E score would then be classified as social introverts. In a consideration of the practices incorporated by introverted pastors into their ministries, this perspective centered on how individuals prefer to interact with the world around them will offer meaningful insight.

36. Sari Pekkala Kerr, William R. Kerr, and Tina Xu, “Personality Traits of Entrepreneurs: A Review of Recent Literature,” *Foundations and Trends in Entrepreneurship* 14.3 (2018): 12.

37. Robert R. McCrae and Oliver P. John, “An Introduction to the Five-Factor Model and Its Applications,” *Journal of Personality* 60.2 (1992): 196.

38. Kerr, Kerr, and Xu, “Personality Traits of Entrepreneurs,” 12.

39. McCrae and John, “An Introduction to the Five-Factor Model and Its Applications,” 178.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is designed to address perceptual and social aspects of introversion as they relate to how introverted pastors carry out ministry. It is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What challenges arise due to a pastor's introverted nature?

RQ2: How can introversion be a blessing to a pastor?

RQ3: What practices do introverted pastors incorporate into their ministries in order to make the most of their God-given personality?

RQ4: How do introverted pastors experience the public ministry?

By considering both theoretical and practical questions related to this topic, the theoretical perspectives described above will bring the collected data to life. The first research question finds its source in the extravert-oriented responsibilities of the pastoral call. Clergy are responsible for a number of things that do not naturally correspond to introversion. To name a few, public speaking, outreach, leading in various meetings, and mixing at gatherings of people can all prove to be daunting tasks for anyone whose natural preference is to be in their inner world. What effect does this have on the introverted pastor? How do they effectively carry out such duties without becoming drained or discouraged? Additionally, the extravert ideal previously described by Susan Cain will come into play here.⁴⁰ Do introverted pastors experience discouragement at the hands of laypeople or other pastors because their personality does not

40. Cain, *Quiet*, 4.

conform to the “ideal self” embraced by the culture? With this research question, I will raise awareness of the difficult experiences that are common among introverted pastors. This will serve as a tool to help such pastors—or those considering entering the public ministry—prepare for challenges they will face.

On the flip side, when Paul lays out the qualifications to be an overseer in the church, none of the requirements have anything to do with where one lies on the spectrum of introversion:

Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap. (1 Tim 3:2-7)

These qualifications are character-related, not personality-based. Introverted pastors are certainly blessed by God with the personality he has given them, and they can use this to his glory in the public ministry. What benefits do they experience as quiet pastors? What areas of their ministries does their introverted nature enhance? Which pastoral duties energize them and give them the most enjoyment? My goal with this question is to find points of encouragement for introverted pastors. Their personality has not made them ill-suited for service as a pastor. Rather, they can rejoice in it and focus on certain natural aspects of their personality in order to serve God’s people.

With the third research question, I will identify several points of concrete advice for introverted pastors. By identifying practices that such pastors have incorporated into their lives, other ministers who may be struggling in such areas will be able to better overcome similar challenges. Furthermore, it is prudent to also consider practices that certain pastors use to avoid

burnout when the extraverted duties of their calling prove to be draining. What can introverted pastors do to survive and thrive in the public ministry? While there are certainly a bevy of answers to that question, I will use the collected data to contribute to that discussion.

The final research question is the question around which all the others revolve. By means of answering phenomenological and practical questions, I will paint a picture of how introverted pastors experience ministry. By hearing the voices of the pastors who have agreed to participate in this study, by listening to their stories of frustration and joy, I will communicate an understanding of what it is like to be an introverted pastor. I pray that this leads to two things: encouragement for introverts to joyfully use their personality to serve in the pastoral ministry and a greater appreciation for God's grace in using human jars of clay to proclaim the good news of his Son's saving name.

RESEARCH METHODS AND PARTICIPANTS

The research for this project was largely interview-based. Participants were all introverted men who have experience serving as WELS pastors. A goal at the outset was to find participants from a wide variety of ages in order to observe how one's self-perception as an introverted pastor may change over time.

Methods Used to Find and Interview Participants

Interviewees were initially contacted over email. I found potential participants by reaching out to pastors who had given me good reason to believe they were introverts based off of previous conversations. Several of those first pastors gave me additional suggestions of some brothers in the ministry whom they believed to be introverted as well. In the initial contact, I introduced myself, explained my reason for reaching out to them, and asked whether or not they would be willing to participate. In that email I also explained that if they agreed to participate, I would need to send them a short personality quiz to ensure that they were indeed introverts.

To those who agreed to participate, I sent a link to a brief quiz designed to determine an individual's four MBTI preferences.⁴¹ In this same email I also sent an "Informed Consent Form" for the participants to look over. This form disclosed the purpose of my research, as well as how

41. This quiz can be found at <https://www.humanmetrics.com/personality>.

I would like to use the information they would provide in the interviews. The participants were promised anonymity in my paper; I did ask that they allow me to share their relative age, how they scored on the personality quiz in the realm of introversion, and the relative ministry settings in which they have served. I asked for permission in two areas in this form. I first requested permission to disclose the information shared in the interviews according to those previously described parameters. The second permission asked for the participant's agreement to have our conversation recorded by the researcher. All participants voluntarily agreed to these terms. Before submitting the final draft of this thesis, I also sent this paper to my participants in order to give them an opportunity read my presentation of their thoughts and approve of it. If any of the participants noted that something I wrote either did not represent their thoughts accurately or contained confidential information, I edited the section.

Most interviews were conducted over Zoom. Two were conducted in-person. For the Zoom interviews, I used the record feature included in the program to obtain an audio recording of our conversation. For the in-person interviews, I used a program called Audacity to record the audio. I used a website called HappyScribe to transcribe the audio into a Word document. This allowed me to reference my participants' responses accurately and quickly.

The interviews were semi-structured in nature. I prepared a brief interview guide which contained questions I might ask. These talking points were based on the research questions I sought to answer in this project. However, rather than planning on sticking rigidly to that guide, I desired to keep the interviews free-flowing and conversational. I planned on asking follow-up questions to seek a deeper understanding of the experiences these pastors were sharing. I also accepted that the interview might never arrive at certain conversations I had included in the

guide. This was due to my determination to honor the one hour time-limit I had promised to my subjects.

Following the completion of the interviews, I read through each of the transcripts while making note of various themes that stood out in the participants' answers. As I did this, I worked to identify themes that showed up across multiple interviews. I maintained a list of recurring motifs and which participants brought up each of them. The purpose of this was to be able to identify the frequency of each theme and provide a simple reference for further research and comparison. I then picked out the most common themes for inclusion in this paper and reread the participants' related comments over and over again in order to be able to synthesize the information they conveyed.

A Brief Description of the Participants

Six pastors were both willing to participate in this study and tested definitively as introverts. I will spend several paragraphs providing some of the basic relevant information regarding my participants. In order to remain faithful to the promise of anonymity, I will assign each pastor a letter that will be used to refer to them. I will list them in the order of their relative ages. It is important that we take some time to get to know them, as their recollections of their experiences as introverted pastors will be vital to this study.

Pastor A

Pastor A is around thirty years old and serving in his first assignment. His personality test revealed a 25% lean towards introversion.⁴² When asked to describe where he sees characteristics of introversion in his personality, Pastor A explained, “I’ve always enjoyed socializing and things like that, but as a pastor, I often find that I want my door shut and to be in my office. And then I feel bad if I have people coming in and wanting to talk to me just out of the blue. I want to be structured.... I like my time to study.... I enjoy talking with my members if it's about substantial things about their life.”⁴³ He serves as an associate pastor at a large parish with a sizeable school attached to it. Pastor A loves the ministry he gets to do there and is very thankful for his call.

Pastor B

Pastor B is around forty years old. His test revealed a 22% lean toward introversion, and he described his personality in the following way:

I realized this about myself when it comes to how I respond in ministry, especially within a context if I'm with someone who's very type A, I back off...I'm typically much quieter in that situation.... So my first congregation I was assigned to, I was on my own, and I really thrived in a setting where I was looked to as the pastor because I knew who I was and I knew what I was doing.... I didn't have any problem leading or speaking up. I bet if you ask anyone in my first congregation, “Was he introverted?” they would say no.... I have no problem talking in front of the Bible study, and I really enjoy it. But if I were in a social setting, I would much rather be talking to one or two people.⁴⁴

42. This would be categorized as a mild lean towards introversion. The higher the percentage of the preference for introversion, the stronger the lean in that direction.

43. Pastor A, interview by author. Zoom call, November 15, 2022.

44. Pastor B, interview by author. Zoom call, November 8, 2022.

He has been blessed to serve in a number of different settings. Pastor B is currently at his third parish. His first call was to be the sole pastor at a congregation of around two hundred.

Following that, he accepted a call to serve as an associate at an even larger church with a school attached to it, and now he is back as the only pastor at a smaller parish. He has also served in a couple of different Latin American ministry settings.

Pastor C

Another pastor around forty years of age, Pastor C began his ministry as one of several associate pastors at a large congregation. Throughout the years of his ministry, he has had the opportunity to serve on a number of different synodical committees and as a circuit pastor. With a 25% lean towards introversion, Pastor C said about himself:

I think I always thought of myself as shy, and I think others would have thought of me as shy. Not necessarily to an extreme degree, but certainly more on the quiet side.... I think there are certain traits that I have that maybe are more traditionally thought of as extroverted. I certainly enjoy, in fact sometimes crave, social settings.... Overall, yeah, just put me in a situation where there's people that I don't know—certainly a bigger group of people—and I'm definitely going to just sort of lay low, feel things out, let other people occupy the attention and the spotlight.⁴⁵

Currently the sole pastor at a mission congregation, Pastor C also talks his need to consistently remind himself to reach out to people and follow up with them due to his natural inclination to be by himself with his thoughts, digging into God's Word.

45. Pastor C, interview by author. Zoom call, November 10, 2022.

Pastor D

This pastor has a heavy lean towards introversion, testing at around an 80% preference for that personality type. He said, “I enjoy working with people, talking with people, getting to know people. But I do notice that it kind of feel like it drains my batteries a little bit being around people and interacting with them.”⁴⁶ In connection with this, he mentioned that—despite how much he loved interacting with the people during busy church events—after a while he would feel the need to get away and just be by himself for a few minutes. Currently around fifty years old and a teacher at one of the WELS educational institutions, Pastor D previously spent around twenty years doing parish ministry as an associate pastor at two different congregations.

Pastor E

Another strong introvert, the personality test identified a 75% lean towards introversion in Pastor E. Now in his late fifties, he is currently the sole pastor of a large congregation of around seven hundred. Earlier in his ministry, he served as an associate at an extremely large church before taking a call to teach religion at an area Lutheran high school. He also has a great deal of experience working with different synodical committees focused on reaching various Asian ethnic groups. Regarding the introverted aspects of his personality, Pastor E said,

When I'm in a new setting, I am almost paralyzed with my thoughts. I cannot say anything. If it's one on one, I have no trouble.... I'm not a quiet person. I'm not a reserved person, but that's after I'm comfortable.... Before I felt comfortable in the group, I would actually write down on a piece of paper the first two lines of what I was going to say.⁴⁷

46. Pastor D, interview by author. In-person, November 10, 2022.

47. Pastor E, interview by author. Zoom call, October 26, 2022.

He describes himself as being sensitive to the different nuances and dynamics that are present in new groups he is a part of. Because of this sensitivity, he often finds himself so preoccupied with processing these variables that he can't vocalize anything.

Pastor F

The sixth and final participant in this study is a pastor in his late sixties. The story of his ministry is filled with a wide variety of diverse experiences. In his over forty years in the public ministry, Pastor F has served as a world missionary, as a pastor at an established congregation back stateside, as a home missionary, and as a teacher at multiple educational institutions. He tested conclusively as an introvert, but the exact percentage could not be determined by the participant.

In discussing the characteristics of introversion that he sees in himself, Pastor F said,

It's that sense of myself as someone that observes, watches, listens, is interested in what people are doing, is interested in how the game is played. I like to reflect on things, like to think about what the causes of things are, where this comes, and where this comes from. I like to analyze culture. I like to analyze why people do what they do.⁴⁸

Despite this affinity for observation, Pastor F did note that—even though he was probably nervous—he would readily speak up at meetings due to a strong sense of duty, recognizing the necessity of carrying out the role of his call to the best of his ability.

48. Pastor F, interview by author. In-person, November 2, 2022.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the next chapter, I will discuss the themes revealed by the participants in this study. I will identify such themes under the umbrella of my four research questions following the order in which the questions were listed.

Difficulties and Challenges

Large Social Gatherings

One recurring difficult scenario that many pastors brought up dealt with the topic of social gatherings with large groups of people. The participants identified weddings, wedding rehearsals, mixers, and large outreach events as particularly daunting and draining. Regarding weddings, Pastor E said, “The thought is the most daunting thing, because once I'm there it's okay. But I don't know what the expectations are. It's like, I'm supposed to be at this table, am I the host of the table?.... And then it's just like, well, what happens if I don't have anything to say? And then I leave, and they go, ‘Well, that guy was kind of a big zero.’”⁴⁹ For him, it is the anticipation of that social gathering that is most intimidating. Pastor E added that—despite the discomfort

49. Pastor E.

leading up to such scenarios and the exhaustion produced by small talk over dinner—every one of those events ends up going fine.

Pastor A described his experience as an introvert at community outreach event in the following way:

I don't care to do things spontaneously. I think people would like me to visit the classrooms and just do those things and kind of be around at events, so I'll do that, but usually I find myself better if I have a set structure or a position [and] I know what I'm doing. For instance, [when we host a community event with vendors] there are around fifteen hundred people going through the building. Am I supposed to wander around and talk to people as they shop? That's not my personality.⁵⁰

He admits that the small talk involved in such events doesn't come as naturally to him as it does to other pastors. Additionally, the need to move from thing to thing in quick succession during those situations is particularly draining. However, he notes that he carries out that responsibility because it is his duty. We will return to this discussion in our consideration of the third research question, because Pastor A offers some insightful practical advice for introverted pastors during those moments.

A couple of common threads appeared in most of the discussions on this issue of large social gatherings. One such thread is the need to make small talk. For instance, in describing his dislike of social gatherings, Pastor F said, "Small talk is not easy for me.... Sure, I can operate with a script, but if I don't have a script in a social occasion, I think I can be somewhat awkward."⁵¹ An aversion to small talk would appear to be consistent with the FFM's assessment of the introvert-extravert dynamic. If someone who tests as a strong extravert would be described by that model as "talkative," an introvert would naturally be labelled as more reserved. McHugh

50. Pastor A.

51. Pastor F.

touches on this when he describes introverts as preferring one-on-one, in-depth conversations as opposed to superficial, surface-level ones.⁵² However, not all introverts struggle with making small talk. For example, in Pastor E's description of himself we saw that he does not think of himself as a quiet person. Even from his perspective, though, these social events that necessitate small talk are internally draining.

A second thread was the presence of a certain degree of uncertainty regarding the pastor's role in such events. This was an even more common thread than the small talk issue. Pastor E touched on it in his description of how he feels sitting through a wedding dinner.⁵³ Pastor B approached this topic in his reflections on different meetings in which he participated and his experience with mingling after church services: "I found draining the meetings where I didn't know my place.... Even after church, I'm around, and if I have someone to talk to, I obviously go talk to them. But even there it can be suddenly [like] I'm just one of the people in the entryway, and I'm not performing a specific duty in that moment."⁵⁴ It appears that closely tied to an introvert's comfortability in a group setting is knowing the dynamic of the setting. Structure and clarity of duty play an important role in these kinds of situations. This may be connected to Cain's discussion of introverts as being more averse to highly stimulating situations.⁵⁵ When those aspects are not defined, another aspect of the outer world arouses the introvert's brain.

52. McHugh, *Introverts in the Church*, 45.

53. Pastor E.

54. Pastor B.

55. Cain, *Quiet*, 122.

Meetings

The topic of meetings was consistently brought up as a difficult item for introverted pastors to navigate. Several pastors expressed it in terms of timidity to speak up. Regarding the inner battle to participate in those meetings, Pastor D said,

I think the situation required for me to be more out there because there were a lot of people—maybe extroverts—with kind of more forthright opinions or louder opinions, and they were very happy to kind of just rush in and fill the space with their thoughts. And maybe my inclination is let them speak. And there were times when—in hindsight—I should have said, “This is not what I'm comfortable with.” I kind of held back because it's just what I naturally wanted to do. I wish I had been a little bit louder in those situations.⁵⁶

Pastor E described his experience as one of being paralyzed with his thoughts when meeting with a new group of people; he felt the need to understand the group and a desire to express himself as clearly as possible.⁵⁷ Referring back to the previously discussed theoretical perspectives, this social characteristic of being reserved in a group setting is the opposite of the FFM’s “assertive” label it applies to strong extraverts. The introspection and orientation towards one’s inner world that the MBTI measures can also be seen in this issue. For those who found it difficult to speak at those meetings, it was not because they didn’t have anything significant to say. In fact, their recollections often showed deep thinking on their part regarding what was going on at the meeting. Their inner worlds were rich with thought, but they found it difficult to verbally transfer that to the outer world.

56. Pastor D.

57. Pastor E.

Outreach

This subject will receive treatment as both an area of difficulty and an area of blessing for the introverted pastor. Certain styles and methods of outreach seem to be less conducive to pastors with this personality type. When asked about how they experience doing evangelism as introverts, several pastors acknowledged having difficulty with large outreach events. Pastor C described events where he knew he would be having hundreds of interactions with strangers as draining and daunting.⁵⁸ Pastor E readily admitted that he wouldn't even begin to know how to do outreach that involved just walking into a group and starting a conversation.⁵⁹ During a season when he was holding a call to be an outreach pastor at another congregation, Pastor B expressed discouragement as he compared himself to other, more gregarious pastors who thrived at that kind of evangelism: "My supervising bishop...was a very outgoing and gregarious guy. And looking at him, I'm like, 'Man, he'll talk to anyone, and I just must not be good at outreach.' I kind of said, 'I'm not your guy. I'm not good at outreach.'"⁶⁰ When carrying out the pastoral duty of outreach, the task of being a loud person at a large-scale event has proved to be a daunting task for introverted pastors. This will be a vital conversation to return to in the blessings section of this chapter. Despite the perceived difficulties in carrying out evangelism in group settings, each one of these pastors offered insightful wisdom they had gained throughout the years as they have found ways to faithfully spread the gospel as introverts.

58. Pastor C.

59. Pastor E.

60. Pastor B.

Blessings of Introversions in Ministry

Personal Study

The study of God's Word is an obvious necessity for anyone who desires to serve in the pastoral ministry. In one of the final charges penned by Paul to Timothy—his fellow pastor—the apostle writes in his letter:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:14-17).

He reminded his brother of the continual importance of the Scriptures, saying that they are useful for both training others and staying personally prepared to serve the Lord. Due to the introvert's natural tendency to focus on inner thoughts and deep concepts, I suspected that personal study of God's Word might be an area of ministry that introverted pastors would enjoy and excel at.

Multiple pastors ended up discussing this when asked about what benefits they had experienced as introverted pastors. When asked about the areas of ministry he felt his introversion enhanced, Pastor A responded by saying:

I think Bible studies and general academic work has been something that has flourished because of that. I also think there are a lot of people who appreciate sometimes when I go deeper on topic.... I'm spending time in God's word. I love doing that. And then if I spend time in God's word, it pulls me out of myself to go and meet with people and do things like that.⁶¹

61. Pastor A.

This time in personal study is a pastoral duty that this person loves to do, and its benefits affect a couple crucial areas of ministry. First, it enhances his preaching and teaching. His love of Scripture helps him as he seeks to edify the people of God. Secondly, it points him away from himself and leads him to go spend time with people. What begins as private time meditating on God's Word in his inner world ends up blessing his interactions with others.

In response to the same question, Pastor D echoed the sentiment that his natural inclination to study and ponder things has had a positive effect on the more public duties of ministry:

I think being somebody who likes to think deeply about things number one certainly helps with preaching and having worthwhile things to say... I think it helps keep preaching fresh that you're always looking for something that is deep enough—and that it's also very specific to a text or to a Sunday—so that you're not sort of regurgitating the same things over and over again, week after week.⁶²

The tendency to enjoy time in one's inner world is not a purely self-benefiting practice. It provides the opportunity for pastors to think of ways to present the truths of God's Word in a winsome way for the edification of the church.

Pastor F discussed the personal ways that this aspect of the pastoral ministry has benefited him. He responded to the question by saying:

The ability to ponder, the ability to reflect and meditate. Now, that has its limits too. But as far as positives, I think those would be the ones I would consider to be the greatest ones. The reflective, meditative moments of quiet within yourself where you can just be with you and your God and think through things. My real joys in life are when something becomes clear to my faith, or something becomes clearer to my mind... And you don't always know where those come from, but you have to have quiet periods for those things to come.⁶³

62. Pastor D.

63. Pastor F.

You can see the profound joy experienced during these times of private meditation. Obviously, extraverts have those moments as well. Introverts are not the only people who sit in silence and ponder the deep truths of faith. However, because their natural inclination is to spend time focusing on their inner world, it is easy to see why this was such a common theme among the participants in this study.

Quick to Listen, Slow to Speak

The FFM identifies assertiveness as a common characteristic of extraverts. This can certainly be a positive quality that helps them lead effectively in a wide variety of circumstances. However, as my participants reflected upon their ministry experiences, they commonly reported a benefit to being less assertive by nature. Being quick to listen and slow to speak often prevented them from speaking in an incendiary way. In his recollections of previous faculty meetings he had been a part of, Pastor E said, “I have said less dumb things than extroverts have. You could quote that one, because I’ve had to retract less things and say sorry less.”⁶⁴ He recalled how a couple of his extraverted friends with whom he served would say “a lot of dumb things” and then have to apologize for them later on. In his experience, introversion was a huge blessing to him because his natural tendency was to observe and thoroughly think through what he was going to say.

Pastor C noted the blessings of this propensity to listen in a couple of different settings: leadership and interpersonal relationships. He explained:

I think the number of times where I put my foot in my mouth are probably pretty few and far between, because I’m not quick to speak without thinking something through pretty carefully. I think even in social situations—especially with people that you’re around

64. Pastor E.

enough that they actually feel like they get to know you—you can develop a reputation as someone who maybe doesn't talk all the time or talk as much as others, but when they do talk, it's worth listening to. People can come to see you as somebody who is going to have worthwhile, valuable things to say.⁶⁵

This response contains a couple important points. First, we see again how being slow to speak helps one guard against making inflammatory comments. Additionally, his comment shows that this preference of introverts can richly benefit communication in general. When someone is more selective with when they open their mouths and voice their thoughts, it can make the moments where they are vocal all the more powerful. It gives the impression that one thoroughly thinks through what they want to say. When this kind of person speaks, it means something.

Other pastors expressed similar thoughts on this topic. Pastor B mentioned that people in general see him as approachable.⁶⁶ Pastor D believed that this was an especially powerful means for connecting with other introverts on a personal level:

I think another way was relating to other introverts, prospects and members who I thought might have kind of gotten lost in the shuffle... I always kind of noticed the people who are like, "That's not me to be out among people as much." I felt I could relate to them a little bit better and maybe try to make contact with them or draw them in. I kind of thought maybe I can be a blessing to other people who kind of tick the way I do, that maybe more extroverted coworkers—certainly they would love them and care about those people—but maybe can't relate to them in quite the same way.⁶⁷

In these pastors' experiences, their introversion did not hinder their interpersonal relationships. It enhanced them. It helped them develop and display a persona that was not intimidating. People of all different types felt they could come to these pastors and be welcomed with open arms. They were able to sympathize with other individuals who maybe felt lost in a sea of social

65. Pastor C.

66. Pastor B.

67. Pastor D.

interaction. Mixing and working the room might not be the strongest quality of many introverts, but that does not prevent them from having meaningful conversations with people.

The benefits of this blessing would naturally extend to both inreach and outreach as the introverted pastor strives to build a connection with the people he is serving. In the difficulties section we discussed the challenge introverts can experience when trying to evangelize in a large gathering. Mixing and mingling is often less conducive to their natural personality type. However, that method is not the be-all and end-all of outreach. These pastors' inclination to listen and speak carefully makes for an ideal combination in carrying out one-by-one outreach, a concept we will return to in the practices section.

Practices of Introverted Pastors

Finding a Place at Large Events

One of the common areas of difficulty expressed by these introverted pastors was the large social gathering. The spontaneity and lack of a definite structure can lead to confusion and anxiety for high-reactive individuals. However, a couple of pastors reflected on a certain practice that helped them in those scenarios. In the section on the challenge of these events, Pastor A had mentioned that wandering around looking for people to chat with did not come easy to his personality, but he found a way to carry out that duty more naturally: "So I said, 'Let me serve the desserts.' Then I can serve some food, and then I'm at least [saying], 'Hey, here you go. Oh, by the way, I'm the pastor, but I'm actually coming to you because I'm giving you a piece of key lime pie or

something.' It's actually become something that's nice, and I kind of need that."⁶⁸ In a chaotic, structureless social event, this pastor found it helpful to create social structure by means of an intentional task.

Pastor D reflected a similar strategy in his experience at these large events. When describing a common practice of his at those gatherings, he explained:

There were times—I don't know if I realized I was doing this— I'd volunteer to go wash dishes in the kitchen after some event because I can just stand there and do my thing. And because I've been talking to people for the last two hours...I'll go help do that. Help in some way and be a part of things, but in a little bit quieter way. But also set an example for people. I thought, "Hey, anybody can do this, jump in and do it." If something needs doing, that's fine. Help out in whatever way you can.⁶⁹

By getting away to carry out this seemingly mundane task, Pastor D accomplished several things. He was still involved in the event that was going on, helping it run smoothly by performing a vital duty that others would appreciate. Additionally, he was setting a quiet example of humble service to those around him. Another notable benefit of this practice is that it helped him recharge his batteries so that he could get back out there later to interact with more people. This concept will be further explored in the next section.

Restorative Niches

A common thread among introverts is the need to act more extraverted than they really are in order to carry out certain vocations in their lives. Pastor F talked about this in the sense of having to be sort of a chameleon, heightening his personality in order to fly the flag of his office: "You

68. Pastor A

69. Pastor D.

adopt different skins, different versions of you that work and that are appropriate to the environment in which you find yourself. So you're both in but not in.”⁷⁰ The occasions in which a pastor might find himself needing to do this are certainly numerous, and they can leave an introvert feeling drained. How can someone keep that up for an entire lifetime of ministry? Brian Little, an introverted professor in the department of psychology at the University of Cambridge, coined the term *restorative niche* to refer to “the place you go when you want to return to your true self.”⁷¹ For an introvert, returning to one’s inner world provides an opportunity for social batteries to be recharged.

Finding opportunities to escape a socially stimulating environment to be one’s true, introverted self was discussed commonly by the participants in this study. It was an aspect of Pastor D’s reflections on getting away to wash dishes at large social gatherings. He found an environment where he could take a break from mingling and just be in the quiet with his thoughts. Reminiscing on his days teaching high school, Pastor E described a common lunchtime practice that allowed him to accomplish this same goal:

The part I dreaded the most was lunch, because I had to go sit at the faculty tables. It was just like, “Oh, I just taught three classes. I don't want to talk about girls’ basketball...or who was tardy.” And so I would just go in my office, and then I would just read.... It was just enough for about that twenty-five minutes of just recharging through reading. And no lights. No sound, because the lights made sound, and that bothered me. And then I was like, “Okay, I'm ready to be released into the general inmate population once again.”⁷²

Pastor E spent long hours every day surrounded by students and faculty alike, working hard to be social as he carried out his duties to serve the people at school. By incorporating half an hour

70. Pastor F.

71. Cain, *Quiet*, 219.

72. Pastor E.

every day to step back from the noise and interaction, he maintained the energy needed to consistently perform the duties of his call.

The participants in this study had different methods of making use of restorative niches. Pastor A—who admittedly did love opportunities to socialize—also often found himself wanting to be alone in his office with the door shut.⁷³ When those times of solitude were interrupted by people wanting to come in out of the blue and chat, he often felt irritated. Pastor F treasured the time he could spend reading literature or watching quality shows.⁷⁴

It is also worth noting that not every participant felt the need to find a restorative niche. Pastor B enjoyed his alone time because it helped him focus on the work he needed to get done, not because he was so drained that he needed to recharge.⁷⁵ He did score on the lower side of the introversion scale, so the shorter social battery may just be one aspect of the personality type that does not resonate with him as much. Alone time is certainly important for more people than just strong introverts, as it can aid in relaxation and concentration. However, the majority of the introverts in this study recognized it as something that was particularly vital in renewing their strength to carry out the extraverted tasks of the public ministry.

One-By-One Outreach

The aspect of the pastoral ministry that this researcher found the most difficult as an introvert was the field of evangelism. I often felt awkward and out of place at the community events put

73. Pastor A.

74. Pastor F.

75. Pastor B.

on by my vicar congregation, unsure how to have a natural, engaging conversation with a stranger in the sea of faces.⁷⁶ Therefore, I was particularly interested to hear about the experiences these pastors had in doing outreach.

The aforementioned extravert ideal can lead to a presupposition regarding what kind of pastor makes the best evangelist. Just like the ideal leader is often pictured as having a strong, gregarious personality, the ideal outreach pastor may be pictured as an expert at mingling and working the room. That preconception can be intimidating and discouraging for an introvert in ministry. However, Pastor B experienced something different over his years of ministry: “Outreach is not just a personality type. It's really caring about people. We tend to just come up with these simplistic ways of looking at things that don't always carry out in reality.”⁷⁷ The factor of evangelism that he has found to be most important has nothing to do with introversion or extraversion. It simply comes down to having a pastoral heart, a heart that leaves the ninety-nine to find the one who has wandered off. The most dynamic personality in the world will not be able to carry out effective evangelism if he does not care about the one who is standing right in front of him.

What are some concrete ways that introverts can naturally put this pastoral heart for outreach into practice? In Pastor A’s years of ministry in his current setting, he has seen his fair share of large-scale outreach events. However, he does not view that as the most effective way to do evangelism:

I think outreach happens one soul at a time best. Maybe that's an introverted way of thinking of it, but we do have events here, and we do a good job of them. We've seen some fruit, but I still feel like it's just best if a member invites their friend or if we can

76. Men studying for the pastoral ministry in the WELS spend one year of preparation serving underneath a supervising pastor at an established congregation. This year of practical training is known as the “vicar year.”

77. Pastor B.

make a contact—maybe at the school—and then bring them in.... We've had so many events. And we've had people who came from events, but I can count them on one hand. And I think about people, whether from the school or invited by a friend or maybe connected to a family, that's usually where you actually get people coming. Not just to get a free hot dog or something, but they're actually coming because they're interested in the message, and you have a chance to connect. And I feel like a lot of times—even if we can work in an element of the Word at an event—that it's not necessarily natural.... The sower doesn't mind that the seeds fall there, but they're probably not going to take root.⁷⁸

Deep personal connections are a component of evangelism that Pastor A has seen bear much fruit in his congregation. Whether it's him doing the outreach and inviting or the families at his church and school, it has not been within the confines of a massive program that those elements have naturally developed. It's been in ordinary interpersonal relationships. This is one-by-one evangelism. This is a practice that introverts are more than equipped to excel at. They don't always need to try to figure out how to put on some larger than life persona at a community picnic. While there are certainly times when it is necessary for them to step outside of their comfort zone for the sake of duty, they can also create opportunities to be who they are and use their gentle nature to allow friendships to naturally develop. This provides them with an opportunity to spread the seed of the gospel.

This was a practice that the participants in this study often referenced as being an area of strength. Pastor D recalled being blessed to have an associate pastor who was more extraverted and comfortable in the large-scale outreach events, but he also acknowledged that he found a niche in connecting with prospects on a one on one level after his associate had made the initial contact.⁷⁹ Pastor E said that he's always been comfortable in one-on-one situations; that way of

78. Pastor A.

79. Pastor D.

doing outreach never really intimidated him.⁸⁰ Pastor C mentioned that he had always felt comfortable canvassing, doing follow-up visits, and arranging meetings with people, as opposed to the draining nature of gatherings where he knew he'd be coming into contact with hundreds of people within the span of a few hours.⁸¹ Despite what the extravert ideal might suggest, the ability to be a witness and spread the gospel is not dependent on one's personality type. These men have all shown that introverts can and do evangelize effectively and in a way that is natural to them.

Lead by Consensus

Another difficult aspect of ministry for the participants in this study was exercising leadership at meetings. Several often found it difficult to speak up. One of the pastors who had previously served with a strong-willed, confident associate pastor said that in those days he simply wasn't a leader.⁸² A theme which was repeated in the interviews of these introverts was an aversion to sitting down in a meeting and telling the group how things were going to be done. According to the FFM introverts are by nature less assertive, and the participants' commonly expressed distaste for commanding the room fits in with that hypothesized characteristic. However, "Type A" leadership is not the only viable option for effectively leading a church.

The pastors I interviewed often made it a point to lead by consensus. Pastor E described this form of church council leadership in the following way:

80. Pastor E.

81. Pastor C.

82. Pastor B.

I will visit with one person about an idea that I have. Then I will have a small group, and we'll talk about the idea together. So I'm not just throwing this out there. And then it will go to our staff, and by the time we go to our staff meeting, half the staff has already talked about this twice. So then the staff is all on board, and then it goes to church council. But by the time you get to church council, half the church council has already heard it and has agreed on it. And so by the time it goes to the voters, the family forum, we've already created consensus.⁸³

He was careful to point out that the introverted pastor needs to be intentionally forthright, offering full disclosure as he goes about creating consensus. If he is not, the result could be that those he is leading view him as duplicitous. The conversations before the meeting are not designed to push an agenda before the subject is discussed officially; the purpose is to discuss whether the matter at hand is even worth considering at the meeting. Pastor E said that introverts probably do miss some opportunities to strike boldly in the moment when they lead in this way. However, it is a legitimate leadership style that is both more comfortable for an introvert and effective at creating harmony in a group.

Pastor B also expressed having a natural inclination toward leading by consensus. When asked about his leadership style, he responded, “Probably more relational, and yet having an idea and leading people towards that versus going out on my own and trying to. That's trying to build consensus and then leading the group towards that.... I think I'm more of an encourager in that way, kind of building people up to seize whatever the mission is and find joy in that.”⁸⁴ This strategy illustrates how one leads by consensus without coming across as conniving. Leading by consensus involves simply talking about ideas with the people you serve. By doing that, a pastor can get his finger on the pulse of how his members feel about certain propositions. If there is joy

83. Pastor E.

84. Pastor B.

and excitement, then he can build on that and work together with them on how to reach their shared goal.

Pastor D echoed similar sentiments in his response to the same question. He answered, “I think I tend to do more things over a longer period of time, kind of establishing trust with people and credibility with people so that I can [lead]. Maybe I'm not the first one to speak or the loudest one to speak, but I've hopefully established a level of trust over time with people that I can give direction and people listen to that.”⁸⁵ This is relational leadership. Similar to how an introverted pastor may be most comfortable doing evangelism relationally, he also may be more comfortable leading in a way that is less assertive and more conversational.

How Does the Introverted Pastor Experience Ministry?

The goal of this study was to gain insight into how introverted pastors experience the public ministry. How do all of the highs and lows of being an introvert in a vocation containing many extravert-oriented duties affect one's experience of that calling? The participants of this study were extremely vulnerable with me in discussing some of their recollections from earlier in the ministry, and for that I thank them. While not every story of frustration, insecurity, and discouragement was included in the body of this paper, there were some significant low points that pastors experienced at least in part due to their inclination to introversion. However, despite these challenging times, these individuals still viewed their calls to ministry with a profound sense of joy and gratitude. In this section, I will seek to unpack that sentiment.

85. Pastor D.

Insecure

It would be ignorant to say that introverts never feel any insecurity about their personality. In his reflection on a ministry experience he had before he ever even entered the pastoral ministry, Pastor B said, “I definitely almost tried to fix my personality. In that situation, I felt like I needed to be more extraverted.... I think when people say you're the serious one, there's a sense of like, ‘Oh, I'm kind of lesser.’”⁸⁶ Especially when a comparison game is being played between an introverted pastor and a more outgoing one, it can be easy for an introvert to look at that aspect of his personality and view it as a defect. Pastor A discussed this as well; some older members would come talk to him about how a former pastor at the church could talk to anyone about anything.⁸⁷ The implication behind these stories seemed to be the question of “Can you do that, Pastor?” It is easy to see how such a question—despite its good intentions—could lead to a pastor’s discouragement.

Insecurity about one’s ability to lead may also be something that is purely internal. For example, Pastor E recalled having a significant amount of negative self-talk when he was still trying to find his place on certain committees and in certain meetings: “I'm looking around, going, ‘Why am I in here?’ At that first meeting, nothing. I got done, and I go, ‘They're going to kick me out of the team because I have nothing to offer.’”⁸⁸ No one had said anything to indicate that they perceived him as unfit to lead at those meetings, but Pastor E’s personal reflections at the time on his own lack of participation led to pessimistic thoughts. These facets

86. Pastor B.

87. Pastor A.

88. Pastor E.

of insecurity may be something that a new pastor has to wrestle with, especially when he first enters ministry. However, as we will discuss later, this struggle can lead to a profound sense of joy and peace as they serve God's people.

Supported

Leading a group of people is an intimidating task in general, and perhaps even more so for introverts when the sense of an extravert ideal looms overhead. Internal questions may abound. "Will these people accept and respect me? Or will they be left wanting something else when they see how reserved I am?" However, while the previous section indicated that people's reactions to an introverted pastor can lead to insecurity, the overall experience of the pastors in this study was that God's people do have a deep appreciation for their faithful ministers, no matter how introverted or extraverted they are.

In the previous section, we heard Pastor A mention how a few people would imply in conversations that they would like him to be more like their previous pastor. However, he finished that same discussion by saying, "But people have been very supportive of me, and I have not really had anybody say anything directly [such as] 'You should be more outgoing.' I think I can just tell certain people who'd like me to, but they don't actually say it."⁸⁹ Despite the fact that some people may have internal thoughts about wanting their introverted pastor to be more outgoing, more than anything they want to support their shepherd as he serves them.

89. Pastor A.

Pastor C expressed a similar thought when I asked him if he had ever felt pressure from the people he served to be more extraverted. He responded,

People are just so nice in the sense that they rarely tell you, “Hey, I really needed you to do this differently.” I think in a lot of cases with just the people of a congregation, they're just either consciously or subconsciously so averse to the idea of in any way criticizing their pastor. If they get frustrated by things, they probably keep it to themselves. That's a bit of a challenge because you just never know. Sometimes you wish people would speak up a little bit more often, but they're naturally pretty supportive.

Two important items are important to point out here. First, it is not a pastor's introversion or extraversion that determine whether or not they will receive the support of their people. The congregation appreciates the work pastor does, and they want to support him as much as possible. However, Pastor C makes a valid point that such overwhelming support can at times be a challenge. This is not a license to fall into complacency or inactivity while using introversion as a shield. It may be important to seek honest feedback from members and discuss how personality and ministry intersect.

Pastor B and Pastor E both noted that an honest conversation about personality can be beneficial to an introverted pastor's relationship with his people. Pastor B mentioned that if someone finds this aspect of their personality becoming a hindrance, it would be good to communicate that to his people so that they don't view it as a lack of zeal or love on his part: “I think if you find it becoming a hindrance, like you find yourself not wanting to be with people and knowing ‘I need to do this, or that I need the time to recharge, whatever that looks like,’ to be able to communicate that. I think people understand that, and they will honor that if they know that you love them. They will love you for the openness to that.”⁹⁰ Pastor E has made it a practice of sharing this with the people he works with, whether it's his confirmation classes or

90. Pastor B.

the pastors in his circuit. People then understand who you are and that you love them, and that can take away any personal feelings of “guilt” or insecurity about being an introvert that God does not want you to have.

Joyful

Despite the aforementioned insecurities and discomfort the pastoral ministry can cause introverts to feel, the pastors I talked to all expressed experiencing great joy related to the blessing of serving as ministers of the gospel. Pastor A expressed his sentiments in this way: “The work is too important.... It's just too important. There are times where I feel like I go home and [I think], ‘Man, that sucks, I did not enjoy this day,’ but at the same point...I'm dealing with God's word and eternal stuff.”⁹¹ There will be difficult, draining days, perhaps more frequently for introverts than extraverts. However, people of all personality types can find fulfillment and delight in the gravity of the work which they are carrying out. God is working through them and their perceived weaknesses to accomplish eternal things. That is a joy that can outshine even the darkest, most difficult day a pastor will experience.

This joy did not always come naturally to all of them. Pastor B described how he had to learn to find joy throughout his twelve years of ministry. Going back to being in a parish as a sole pastor helped get rid of the tension and insecurity he felt when he had an associate. He said, “I find a lot more joy in ministry. I've rediscovered joy... and I didn't even realize how it had kind of taken joy from my ministry. And so I'm really thankful to have that again, much like my

91. Pastor A.

first call. I don't know, I think that's just something about knowing your personality and knowing where you thrive.”⁹² Discovering this helped him see that he loves just being a pastor. He loves visiting people in the hospital or in nursing homes. He loves teaching and getting together with his leaders. There was a journey involved in getting back to that realization, but he did find a setting that he could thrive in and experience the joy of being a pastor again.

Every person’s journey to find this joy will be different. Some introverts may be so drawn to their inner worlds that they never find it. In response to the question of what he would say to someone who is questioning their ability to be a pastor because of their introverted nature, Pastor F put it this way:

The key questions are, do you love God's Word? Do you love God's people in that empathetic desire to protect and understand and care for others? If that's there, it's going to be fine.... And not everybody feels that sense of responsibility for others... not everybody feels it to the same degree, that desire to shepherd [and] take responsibility for other people. If that's how your introversion manifests itself [feeling no such responsibility], then well, maybe not. There are other ways you can serve the Lord, but the introvert who feels a responsibility for others is going to engage others in conversation, is going to beat the bushes whether he likes to or not. Something's going to drive them out there.⁹³

Not everyone is fit to be a pastor. This is true for extraverts and introverts alike. However, there are certain extraverted duties of the pastoral office that are absolutely vital to carry out. If someone is so introverted that he cannot do them, or doing them proves to drain him of joy, another vocation may need to be considered. The introverted pastor must have a strong sense of duty and responsibility for others’ spiritual well-being if he is going to faithfully shepherd God’s people. The introverts I interviewed had a massive heart for people. This allowed serving their people to fill them with joy, even when it was difficult for them to spend that much time outside

92. Pastor B.

93. Pastor F.

of their inner worlds. It may take some time to find a setting where the introvert can experience the fullness of that joy. It may take years for him to learn how to flourish in the setting he has found himself planted in. However, a heart for the duty involved in shepherding souls will help the introvert find and preserve that joy.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

“If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body” (1 Cor 12:17-20). The apostle Paul writes these words on the unity and diversity in the body of believers to teach the necessity of having many different parts. Not everyone can have the same skills or personality, and there is beauty in how God uses people of all different types to edify the church. The purpose of this study was to shed light on how God uses introverts to serve the body of believers. Despite the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the introverted personality, despite the highs and lows they experience as they carry out the public ministry, God has made them exactly who he wants them to be. They are indeed a vital part of the body of Christ.

All six of the pastors interviewed for this project have used their distinct gifts and abilities to serve faithfully in a wide variety of settings. Their love for God’s people and the Great Commission led them into the pastoral ministry, and they have used their unique personalities to point people to their Savior in this field. As I listened to them unfold their stories, I couldn’t help but think of some words from Paul’s second letter to the Christians at Corinth: “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Cor 4:7). The gospel which Christians are blessed to proclaim gets its power from God, not from the one who speaks it. No matter how introverted or extraverted a pastor is,

no matter which personality one's culture views as ideal, the Lord's power that works through the Word does not change. His wide variety of messengers are blessed to take this life-saving message with them into the world, and they can have confidence in knowing that he will not let it return to him empty. When introverted pastors carry out their calling, when they experience the ups and downs of the public ministry, when they try to find their way in ministry and maybe even question their ability, may they always have this on their mind. The Lord of the harvest will use the treasure that is within them to save and edify his people. Take heart, you are exactly the part of the body of believers that God created you to be, to the glory of his name.

APPENDIX 1. INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research. My name is Grant Hagen, a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. I am conducting this study as part of my senior thesis project (TH3300) on the topic of the implications of being an introverted pastor. This project is in partial fulfillment of my MDiv degree. You have been invited to participate in this research because I believe that you can provide valuable information on the topic. I will be asking you questions about how you have experienced the pastoral ministry as an introvert. The interview will last approximately 1 hour.

Your involvement in this research will be shared in the form of quotes from our interview and comparison with how the data gleaned matches up with different personality theories on introversion. This data will then be applied to the pastoral ministry at large in order to encourage and guide introverted pastors. Your identity will remain anonymous as your voice is heard in my paper. I will share relative age, the ministry settings in which you have experience serving (urban, rural, multicultural, educational, etc.), and where you fall on the scale of introversion.

If you agree to the audio recording of the interview, the recording will be deleted after the research project is completed.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may choose not to answer any or all questions. You may fully withdraw from the interview at any time and information that you provided will not be reported in the research.

“By signing this consent form, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study under the conditions described.”

Name : _____ Date: _____

“I furthermore agree to the audio recording of this interview, and understand that the recording will be deleted upon completion of the research project.” _____ (initials)

APPENDIX 2. INTERVIEW GUIDE USED BY AUTHOR

Overarching question: What are the implications of being an introverted pastor?

I. Introduction

My questions today will focus on your experience as an introverted pastor. First, I'd like to talk about your experience as an introvert in general:

- Where have you all served?
- What characteristics of introversion do you see in yourself?
 - Is this something that you are conscientious of?
- The whole introvert-extrovert personality type is on a spectrum, with few people being 100% one or the other. Can you tell me about any extraverted qualities or tendencies you've noticed in yourself?
- Describe your leadership style.

II. The Introverted Pastor: Difficulties

- Which of your duties as a pastor have you find the most draining?
 - What about them is daunting?
- It's sometimes said that we live in a world that's embraced the "extravert ideal," that extraversion is the ideal personality type, especially for leaders. As we get started talking about what it's like to be an introverted pastor, I'd like to talk about that a little bit because it can be hard to function as an introvert in a world like that. As a pastor, have you ever had to act more extraverted than you really are in order to carry out your role? How did that go?
 - Do you feel the need to recharge after those moments? If so, how do you do that?
- Tell me about a time when it was really challenging to be an introverted pastor.
- Have you ever felt pressured from other people to be more extraverted? Describe your experience with that.

III. The Introverted Pastor: Blessings

- As you look back on your experiences in ministry, what have been some benefits of being a quiet pastor? What areas of your ministry have been enhanced by it?
- What are some aspects of pastoral ministry that seem to coincide well with introversion in your experience?
 - What is it that you like about them?

IV. Practices for the Introverted Pastor

- Earlier we discussed what ministry-related tasks you find the most daunting. How do you find the strength and ability to carry them out effectively?
- How important is recharging to you? How do you recharge?

- Have you ever had a conflict with say a member or lay leader arise because they had extraverted expectations of you? How did you handle that?
 - How necessary is it to communicate your introverted nature to those you serve?
- Have you become more comfortable with tasks that used to overwhelm you as an introvert? How so?
- Have you ever felt burnt out by all of the extraverted tasks that are required of you? How do you remedy that?
- What would you say to someone who is questioning their ability to be an effective pastor due to their introverted nature?

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